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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 006266

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/01/2015

TAGS: [ECON](#) [KDEM](#) [KMPI](#) [KPAO](#) [IS](#) [ISRAELI](#) [SOCIETY](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S IFTAR CELEBRATES RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY
IN ISRAEL

Classified By: Ambassador Richard H. Jones for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (U) SUMMARY: Ambassador Jones hosted over 80 Muslim, Christian and Jewish guests for an interfaith Iftar dinner on October 27 to break the fast during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. The Iftar brought together Israeli-Arab leaders from the political, business and social-action arenas. At the event, the Ambassador showcased U.S. grants to support Israeli-Arab education in Israel's south and central regions and education programs for the Israeli-Arab community such as the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) and the English ACCESS Microscholarship Program designed to teach English to selected underprivileged Arab students. Post continues its outreach to the Arab community in Israel through visits to Israeli-Arab communities, meetings with community leaders and civil rights representatives. END SUMMARY.

Ambassador's Iftar with Israeli Arabs

2. (U) Ambassador Jones hosted an Iftar dinner on October 27 attended by prominent Israeli Arabs from the political, social, and economic sectors. The Ambassador used this opportunity to highlight Post's support for Israeli-Arab educational and social projects, including grants totaling USD 9,500 to support Israeli-Arab education projects in the Bedouin village of Rahat and the mixed Jewish - Arab city of Jaffa. He announced that these grants will go towards the purchase of English books and other learning material, and will also provide for after school programs.

U.S. Grant for the Irony Yud-Bet Public School in Jaffa

3. (C) Azim Mansour, an English teacher at Jaffa's Irony Yud-Bet Public School, an Israeli-Arab school with 612 Arab students, told econoff September 14 that the school is working to expand its English Resource Center. She added, however, that the school lacks funding to help its students do better on GOI-administered English tests, and that any USG assistance is welcome. Post worked closely with school officials and recently granted USD 2,000 to fund the purchase of English language books for the Center.

U.S. Grant for Bedouin Community Center in the Negev

4. (C) On June 10, econoff met with Mansour Nasasra, Project Manager for Rahat Forward, a non-governmental organization dealing with Bedouin issues in the Negev. Nasasra, who lives in the Bedouin village of Rahat, said his community's population is increasing quickly due to a high birth rate. He claimed that many families do not have the necessary income to live beyond a subsistence existence and that any support given by outside sources is appreciated. He indicated that Bedouin youth have access to books, computers, and games in school, but that there are no resources available for after school learning.

5. (U) Nasasra described the Rahat Community Center as an excellent facility built by the GOI, but said that its library, the first in Rahat, lacks books and furniture. On August 15, Post gave a grant of USD 7,500 to facilitate the purchase of books and other related material for the library, which serves approximately 20,000 Bedouin. Nasasra expressed gratitude for the funding and characterized the contribution as one that will serve the entire Bedouin community and encourage the educational aspirations of Bedouin youth.

MEPI and ACCESS

6. (U) Mansour and Nasasra pointed to Israeli-Arab students' low English scores on Israel's mandatory matriculation exams. They have indicated in the past that this is a main barrier preventing these students from entering universities. The reason for these low English scores is that English is a third, not second, language for most Arabs in Israel. Post's ongoing outreach to Israel's Arab community through a variety of grants, programs, and exchanges, including those run under the auspices of MEPI, will help address some of the concerns

mentioned above. Post will step up its support of Arab sector in the 2005 - 2006 school year through the English ACCESS Microscholarship Program, providing 770 underprivileged Arab students an opportunity to improve their English.

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JONES